Menopause Means Worse Pain, Fatigue

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Postmenopausal women living with HIV have worse fatigue, muscle aches and insomnia compared with those who are still menstruating.

Researchers conducted a survey of 222 HIV-positive women; about half had undergone menopause either naturally or as a result of a hysterectomy, and half were still having their periods.

Compared with the menstruating women, the postmenopausal women were more likely to experience muscle aches and pains, fatigue and difficulty falling asleep. These findings held after the researchers controlled their data for differences in the women's age, how long they had been living with HIV and any HIV-associated non-AIDS health conditions they had.

"These preliminary findings suggest the need for further study of the physiological processes that may be contributing to exacerbated fatigue and muscle aches in older women living with HIV," says Rebecca Schnall, RN, PhD, MPH, an associate professor at Columbia University's School of Nursing and the study's first and corresponding author.

According to Schnall, "Postmenopausal women living with HIV can consider a number of non-estrogen therapies that may improve the inflammation that is likely contributing to worse fatigue and muscle aches, such as: diet modification, hydrotherapy, exercise, massage and reflexology."

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